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Dianne Wampler 10/17/2006 08:48:34 PM From DB/Inbox: Dianne Wampler

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Text:

UNCLAS SENSITIVE ANKARA 05899

SIPDIS  
CX:

ACTION: FAS  
INFO: AMB POL DCM ECON PMA

DISSEMINATION: FAS  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AGR:RGIFFORD  
DRAFTED: AGR:CGUVEN  
CLEARED: ECON:DYOUNG, DCM:NMCEDOWNEY

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PP RUEHC RUEHRC RUCPDOC RUEHIT RUEHDA RUEHVI  
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9347  
INFO RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1456  
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1221  
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 1604  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005899

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STATE FOR EUR/SE, EB/EPD, and EB/TPP/ABT  
DEPT PLEASE PASS USTR FOR LERRION, JWEISS  
USDA OSEC FOR TERPSTRA  
USDA FAS FOR FAA/DEVER, ITP/MACKE, FLEMINGS  
USDOC FOR DEFALCO  
ISTANBUL FOR FAS  
VIENNA FOR APHIS  
BRUSSELS USEU FOR FAS, APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAGR ETRD TU

SUBJECT: Agricultural Counselor Meeting with Mehdi Eker, Minister of Agriculture,

Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet Distribution.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. In an October 10 meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), AgCouns and Minister Mehdi Eker discussed key topics regarding agricultural cooperation. Minister Eker thanked USDA for hosting him last month in Washington, and said he looked forward to Secretary Johanns' coming to Turkey, and to signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on agricultural cooperation. On Avian Influenza (AI) Minister Eker said he appreciated U.S. support and recognition of Turkey's potential as a regional model for AI response. He said he was amenable to hosting a ceremonial signing of the USAID AI assistance grant with the Ambassador. He also responded to Agcouns' queries about pet food and biotechnology legislation. Deputy Undersecretary Ferhat Shelli also attended. End Summary.

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Ministerial Travel and Memorandum of Understanding  
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¶2. (SBU) At an October 10 courtesy call by newly-arrived AgCouns,

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) Mehdi Eker expressed his thanks to USDA for hosting him in Washington last month. Pointing out that it has been 25 years since a U.S. Secretary of Agriculture has visited Turkey, he said he looks

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forward to a reciprocal visit to Turkey by Secretary Johanns, hoping it would include the signing of an MOU on agricultural cooperation. He repeated that he had invited U.S. Agriculture Secretary Johanns to visit Turkey and that he understood that Secretary Johanns had accepted the invitation.

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Minister's Comments on Avian Influenza  
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¶4. (SBU) Minister Eker stated that MARA is preparing for the migratory season and is working very closely with the Ministry of Health. He said that his government is creating a national communication plan to respond to expected outbreaks of AI. Agcouns offered assistance if the Ministry wished to find an outside expert on risk communication.

¶5. (SBU) Agcouns informed the Minister that the Ambassador had expressed an interest in Turkey's potential as a regional leader in managing AI. Minister Eker agreed, replying that he would like Turkey to continue to expand its position as a regional role model. He said he would direct his staff to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and international organizations such as FAO and WHO to organize an international seminar on coordinating efforts to prepare for and handle the next avian influenza crisis. Because AI is a trans-boundary disease and a global issue, he said he hoped not only Turkey's neighbors, but also North African and Central Asian countries, Russia, Ukraine and Israel could attend.

¶6. (SBU) Agcouns asked Minister Eker if he would be willing to host a signing ceremony for the \$1 million USAID grant for avian influenza activities. Minister Eker said that he would be happy to host such a ceremony. He replied favorably to a suggested November 7 date. (Note: FAS will coordinate to finalize date).

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Minister's Comments on Other Agricultural Issues  
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¶6. (SBU) PET FOOD: Agcouns thanked the Minister for his staff's efforts in resolving the pet food dioxin certification issue. Both Minister Eker and DUS Shelli confirmed that a letter had been sent last week instructing Provincial Directorate offices that U.S. pet food shipments no longer were required to have additional dioxin certification. Shelli said an official letter with this information would be sent to Embassy very soon (Note: After the meeting FAS received a fax copy of this letter, which has been forwarded to Washington agencies).

¶7. (SBU) BIOTECHNOLOGY: Minister Eker confirmed rumors that a new draft Biosafety Law was circulating at a high level. (Comment: Post is making attempts to obtain an advance copy of this draft) He added that a new Seed Law, closely linked with the draft biotechnology law, will be voted on in Parliament by next week.

¶8. (SBU) GSM-102 AND OTHER ASSISTANCE: Agcouns shared with the Minister the October 6 USDA press release announcing the FY 07 GSM-102 program and briefly explained its benefits to Turkey. Agcouns also mentioned that USDA hoped to work closely with the Ministry to decide how best to provide technical assistance to improve the competitiveness of Turkish agriculture, as increased competitiveness would reduce protectionist resistance to market opening. Minister Eker expressed his thanks and willingness to cooperate.

WILSON